DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 418 180 UD 032 240

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TITLE	Youth Afterschool Programs and the Role of Law Enforcement. NIJ Research in Progress [videotape].
INSTITUTION	Department of Justice, Washington, DC. National Inst. of Justice.
PUB DATE	1996-10-00
NOTE	0p.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Criminal Justice Reference Service, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000 ($19; $24 in Canada and other countries); telephone: 800-851-3420; e-mail: askncjrs@ncjrs.org
PUB TYPE	Non-Print Media (100)
EDRS PRICE	Document Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*After School Programs; Community Programs; Crime Prevention; *Delinquency Prevention; Elementary Secondary Education; Extracurricular Activities; *Law Enforcement; *Police; *Urban Youth; Videotape Recordings; *Youth Programs

ABSTRACT

Recent findings show that children and teens are most vulnerable either to committing or being a victim of crime between 2:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Community organizations with afterschool programs are particularly well positioned to counter some of the hazards that threaten children, especially urban adolescents: drug abuse, gang activity, and criminal involvement or victimization. The National Institute of Justice and the Carnegie Corporation of New York jointly sponsored a national survey of youth-serving organizations to discover the dimensions of crime affecting these organizations during nonschool hours and the approaches they are using to prevent such crime. The survey found that local affiliates of many national organizations are serving many children and adolescents, and that they are likely to enlist police assistance in implementing prevention programs. Questionnaires were sent to a random sample of more than 1,000 program directors and volunteers, and there was a 47% response rate. About half the responding organizations were in big cities with high crime rates, and about one-quarter were in big cities with relatively low crime rates. Children told program staff that they wanted programs that were challenging, with a range of choices and activities that bolster social and educational skills. The children served by these programs want leaders who understand what it is like to live in neighborhoods where there is violence. The organizations most affected by crime, and many are, are reaching out to the police to help them with prevention. Three case studies provide examples of effective partnerships between youth-serving organizations and police departments. These three cities experienced lower rates of crime after actively involving adolescents in these programs, and the children and teens being served felt that they were contributing to the community. (SLD)

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